

Overview

Explorer Stephen Long described the lands west of the Mississippi River as the “Great American Desert.” This description was the basis for Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal Act of 1830. Many American Indian tribes from the eastern United States were removed to reservations in this region. There were differing opinions expressed on the issue of Indian removal. Students will read some of these opinions as expressed in speeches and will determine the main ideas from those speeches. These activities are designed to be done over three days but can be adjusted according to classroom needs.

Standards

History:

Benchmark 1, Indicator 3: The student explains how Long’s classification of Kansas as the “Great American Desert” influenced later U.S. government policy on American Indian relocation.

Reading:

Benchmark 4, Indicator 10: The student identifies the topic, main idea(s), supporting details, and theme(s) in text across the content areas from a variety of sources in appropriate-level texts.

Benchmark 4, Indicator 15: The student distinguishes between fact and opinion, and recognizes propaganda (e.g., advertising, media, politics, warfare), bias, and stereotypes in various types of appropriate-level texts.

Objectives

Content:

- The students will explain the connection between the idea of the “Great American Desert” and the Indian relocation policy of the United States government.
- The students will be able to retell some reasons for Indian relocation from the U.S. government’s point of view.
- The students will explain the response of some American Indians to the policy of relocation.

Skills:

- The students will identify the main ideas in primary sources.
- The students will analyze a political speech to determine both “fact” and “opinion.”

Essential Questions

- Why did the United States government think that Indian relocation was a fair policy?
- What options did the Indians have to the continued western expansion of Americans?

Activities

This activity uses the following *Read Kansas!* cards:

- **Indian Removal to the “Great American Desert”**
- **President Andrew Jackson’s 1830 Speech to Congress**
- **American Indian Response to Removal from their Homelands**

Day 1

1. Read and discuss the **Indian Removal to the “Great American Desert”** *Read Kansas!* card to begin a discussion of the Indian Removal Act of 1830. If your class has advanced reading skills you might want to look at the actual Indian Removal Act that can be found online in several locations.

Day 2

1. Divide the class into small groups. Have each group read and discuss **President Andrew Jackson’s 1830 Speech to Congress** *Read Kansas!* card.
2. Using the **Finding the Main Idea** graphic organizer for President Jackson’s speech, have each group find the main idea for each paragraph. Have the students individually find the overall main idea of the speech. Using the students’ graphic organizers discuss the speech as a class.
3. Discuss why Jackson gave this speech. This was a political speech to persuade members of Congress that Indian removal was a good policy for the United States.
4. Write the words “fact” and “opinion” on the board and discuss their meanings. As a class make a list of phrases or ideas in Jackson’s speech that can be categorized under each word. Discuss that political speeches tend to be a mixture of “fact” and “opinion” (primarily opinion), because they are meant to persuade the listener to a particular point of view.

Day 3

1. Discuss that there were opinions other than Jackson’s about the Indian Removal Act. This act had a profound effect on American Indians.
2. Divide the class into small groups and have each group read and discuss the **American Indian Response to Removal from Their Homelands** *Read Kansas!* card.
3. Using the **Finding the Main Idea** graphic organizer for Senachwine’s speech, have each group find the main idea for each paragraph of Senachwine’s response. Have the students individually find the overall main idea of the speech. Using the students’ graphic organizers discuss the speech as a class.

Assessment

- Observe the students’ ability to work cooperatively.
- Evaluate the student’s ability to identify the main idea of Jackson’s speech.
- Evaluate the student’s ability to identify the main idea of Senachwine’s speech.

For the Teacher

If you are using the textbook *The Kansas Journey*, this lesson can be used with pages 53-59.

Jackson's Speech Answer Key

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Speech by President Andrew Jackson, 1830</p> <p>... The consequences of a speedy removal will be important to the United States, to individual States, and to the Indians themselves.</p> <p>... By opening the whole territory between Tennessee on the north and Louisiana on the south to the settlement of the whites it will ... strengthen the southwestern frontier ... It will relieve the whole State of Mississippi and the western part of Alabama of Indian occupancy, and enable those States to advance rapidly in population, wealth, and power.</p> | <p>Main idea of paragraph</p> <p>Removing Indians from eastern and southern states will make the land safe for white settlers and the states will prosper.</p> |
| <p>It will separate the Indians from immediate contact with settlements of whites; free them from the power of the States; enable them to pursue happiness in their own way and under their own ... institutions; will retard the progress of decay, which is lessening their numbers, and perhaps cause them gradually, under the protection of the Government and through the influence of good counsels, to cast off their [Indian] habits and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community. ...</p> | <p>Separating Indians from whites will be good for the Indians.</p> |
| <p>... The tribes which occupied the countries now constituting the Eastern States were annihilated or have melted away to make room for the whites. The waves of population and civilization are rolling to the westward, and we now propose to acquire the countries occupied by the red men of the South and West by a fair exchange, and, at the expense of the United States, to send them to land where their existence may be prolonged ...</p> | <p>The U.S. is growing. White settlers want the land. The Indians will be paid fairly and relocated to a place good for them.</p> |
| <p>Doubtless it will be painful to leave the graves of their fathers; but [is this not] what ... our ancestors did ... ? To better their condition in an unknown land our forefathers left all that was dear in earthly objects. Our children by thousands yearly leave the land of their birth to seek new homes in distant regions ... [They move] ... thousands of miles at their own expense, purchase the lands they occupy, and support themselves at their new homes from the moment of their arrival. [Is] it cruel [for] this Government when ... the Indian is made discontented in his ancient home to purchase his lands, to give him a new and extensive territory, to pay the expense of his removal, and support him a year in his new abode?</p> | <p>We aren't asking the Indians to do anything our ancestors haven't done and continue to do—which is to move. The Indians even have an advantage because they are being paid to move.</p> |
| <p>How many thousands of our own people would gladly embrace the opportunity of removing to the West on such conditions! If the offers made to the Indians were extended to them, they would be hailed with gratitude and joy.</p> | <p>White people think the Indians are getting a good deal.</p> |

What is the main idea or main point of Jackson's speech?

The Indian Removal Act is good for the Indians and good for the country.

Fact and Opinion in Jackson's Speech Answer Key

Fact: The quality of being actual

Opinion: A view formed in someone's mind about a particular matter

Fact phrases:

Paragraph 2:

"It will separate the Indians from immediate contact with settlements of whites"

Paragraph 3:

"The tribes which occupied the countries now constituting the Eastern States were annihilated or have melted away to make room for whites."

"The waves of population and civilization are rolling to the westward"

"to send them to land where their existence may be prolonged..."

Paragraph 4:

"To better their condition in an unknown land our forefathers left all that was dear in earthly objects. Our children ...seek new homes in distant regions"

"[They move]...thousands of miles at their own expense, purchase the lands they occupy, and support themselves at their new homes..."

Opinion phrases:

Paragraph 1:

"speedy removal will be important to the United States, to individual States, and to the Indians themselves"

"strengthen the southwestern frontier"

"enable those States to advance rapidly in population, wealth, and power"

Paragraph 2:

"enable them to pursue happiness in their own way and under their own institutions"

"will retard the progress of decay"

"to cast off their [Indian] Habits and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community..."

Paragraph 3:

"..we now propose to acquire the countries occupied by the red men...by a fair exchange.."

Paragraph 4:

"Doubtless it will be painful to leave the graves of their fathers..."

"[Is] it cruel [for] this Government when... the Indian is made discontented in his ancient home to purchase his lands..."

Paragraph 5:

"How many thousands of our own people would gladly embrace the opportunity of removing to the West on such conditions!"

Senachwine's Speech Answer Key

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Speech by Senachwine, Potawatomi, 1830</p> <p>For more than seventy years I have hunted in this grove and fished in this stream, and for many years I have worshipped on this ground. Through these groves and over these prairies in pursuit of game our fathers roamed, and by them this land was left unto us as a heritage forever. No one is more attached to his home than myself, and none among you is so grieved to leave it. But the time is near at hand, when the red men of the forest will have to leave the land of their nativity, and find a home toward the setting sun. The white men of the east, whose numbers are like the sands of the sea, will overrun and take possession of this country. They will build wigwams and villages all over the land, and their domain will extend from sea to sea.</p> | <p>Main idea of paragraph</p> <p>We have lived on this land for many years but we must leave because the white men want it and there are more of them than us.</p> |
| <p>In my boyhood days I have chased the buffalo across the prairies, and hunted the elk in the groves; but where are they now? Long since they have left us; the near approach of the white man has frightened them away. The deer and the turkey will go next, and with them the sons of the forest.</p> | <p>The white settlers have driven away our source of food.</p> |
| <p>Resistance to the aggression of the whites is useless; war is wicked and must result in our ruin. Therefore, let us submit to our fate, return not evil for evil, as this would offend the Great Spirit and bring ruin upon us. The time is near when our race will become extinct, and nothing left to show the world that we ever did exist.</p> | <p>If we fight we will die and our race will become extinct. The Great Spirit does not approve of war.</p> |

What is the main idea or main point of Senachwine's speech?

It is our fate to move.

Finding the Main Idea: Jackson's Speech

| Speech by President Andrew Jackson, 1830 | Main idea of paragraph |
|---|-------------------------------|
| ... The consequences of a speedy removal will be important to the United States, to individual States, and to the Indians themselves. ... By opening the whole territory between Tennessee on the north and Louisiana on the south to the settlement of the whites it will ... strengthen the southwestern frontier ... It will relieve the whole State of Mississippi and the western part of Alabama of Indian occupancy, and enable those States to advance rapidly in population, wealth, and power. | |
| It will separate the Indians from immediate contact with settlements of whites; free them from the power of the States; enable them to pursue happiness in their own way and under their own ... institutions; will retard the progress of decay, which is lessening their numbers, and perhaps cause them gradually, under the protection of the Government and through the influence of good counsels, to cast off their [Indian] habits and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community. ... | |
| ... The tribes which occupied the countries now constituting the Eastern States were annihilated or have melted away to make room for the whites. The waves of population and civilization are rolling to the westward, and we now propose to acquire the countries occupied by the red men of the South and West by a fair exchange, and, at the expense of the United States, to send them to land where their existence may be prolonged ... | |
| Doubtless it will be painful to leave the graves of their fathers; but [is not this] what ... our ancestors did ... ? To better their condition in an unknown land our forefathers left all that was dear in earthly objects. Our children by thousands yearly leave the land of their birth to seek new homes in distant regions ... [They move] ... thousands of miles at their own expense, purchase the lands they occupy, and support themselves at their new homes from the moment of their arrival. [Is] it cruel [for] this Government when ... the Indian is made discontented in his ancient home to purchase his lands, to give him a new and extensive territory, to pay the expense of his removal, and support him a year in his new abode? | |
| How many thousands of our own people would gladly embrace the opportunity of removing to the West on such conditions! If the offers made to the Indians were extended to them, they would be hailed with gratitude and joy. | |

What is the main idea or main point of Jackson's speech? _____

Finding the Main Idea: Senachwine's Speech

| Speech by Senachwine, Potawatomi, 1830 | Main idea of paragraph |
|--|-------------------------------|
| For more than seventy years I have hunted in this grove and fished in this stream, and for many years I have worshipped on this ground. Through these groves and over these prairies in pursuit of game our fathers roamed, and by them this land was left unto us as a heritage forever. No one is more attached to his home than myself, and none among you is so grieved to leave it. But the time is near at hand, when the red men of the forest will have to leave the land of their nativity, and find a home toward the setting sun. The white men of the east, whose numbers are like the sands of the sea, will overrun and take possession of this country. They will build wigwams and villages all over the land, and their domain will extend from sea to sea. | |
| In my boyhood days I have chased the buffalo across the prairies, and hunted the elk in the groves; but where are they now? Long since they have left us; the near approach of the white man has frightened them away. The deer and the turkey will go next, and with them the sons of the forest. | |
| Resistance to the aggression of the whites is useless; war is wicked and must result in our ruin. Therefore, let us submit to our fate, return not evil for evil, as this would offend the Great Spirit and bring ruin upon us. The time is near when our race will become extinct, and nothing left to show the world that we ever did exist. | |

What is the main idea or main point of Senachwine's speech? _____
